**THE SEASONS Joseph Haydn.**

Haydn was inspired to write *The Seasons* following the great success of his previous oratorio *The Creation*. The libretto for *The Seasons* was prepared for Haydn, just as with *The Creation*, by Baron Gottfried van Swieten, an Austrian nobleman who had also been an important influence on Mozart. Van Swieten based his libretto on extracts from the long English poem ‘The Seasons’ by James Thomson (1700-1748). Haydn took two years to complete the work and its first performance was for the aristocracy, whose members had financed the work, at the Schwarzenberg Palace, Vienna, in April 1801

The composition process was arduous for Haydn, in part because of his failing health, but the sheer exuberance of the work shows no sign of this. Although the work has always attracted far less attention than *The Creation,* it nonetheless has been strongly appreciated by the critics. Charles Rosen calls both oratorios “*among the greatest works of the century”* but judges *The Seasons* to be musically more successful of the two. Daniel Heartz, writing near the end of a massive three-volume account of the Classical era, writes *“no music has elated me more in old age than ‘The Seasons’”*

**JULIE COOPER. Soprano.**

Julie studied at the Royal Academy of Music winning prizes including the Croft Prize for Early Music and graduating with a DipRAM. She has regularly sung with The Hilliard Ensemble, The King’s Consort and Harry Christopher’s The Sixteen. She appeared in three highly acclaimed series of Sacred Music presented by Simon Russell Beale on BBC4. With operatic roles and many recordings and TV appearances Julie’s busy career has taken her to opera houses and concert halls across the world.

**THOMAS HOBBS, Tenor.**

Having studied at the Royal College of Music under Neil Mackie; Thomas is in demand with many leading baroque and early music ensembles appearing throughout Europe and the US as a soloist in key works from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Operatic roles include a critically acclaimed Telemachus *The Return of Ulysses* in a production for English National Opera. His recordings include the Bach’s B Minor Mass and Mozart’s Requiem, the latter receiving the 2014 Gramophone Award for the best Choral recording.

**RUPERT REID, Baritone.**

Rupert Reid was a Lay Clerk at St. John’s College, Cambridge, a Choral Scholar in the Kings College Choir, Cambridge and is a deputy Lay Vicar in the Westminster Abbey Choir. He has performed with four of the best choirs in the world, as voted by Gramophone Magazine, including the group in number one position, the Monteverdi Choir directed by Sir John Eliot-Gardiner. Rupert has sung many operatic roles and as a soloist he has made many recordings and appearances on TV and radio including the BBC Proms.